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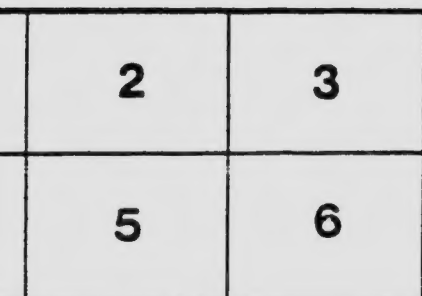
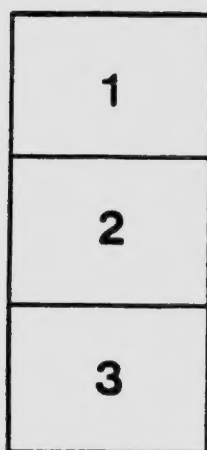
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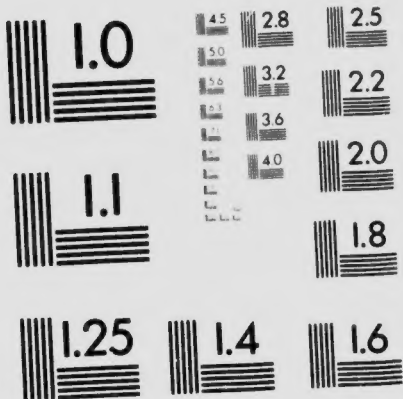
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PASTORAL LETTER

OF THE

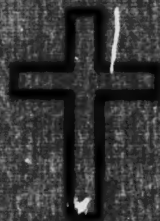
Right Rev. E. A. LeBLANC, D.D.

Bishop of St. John

TO

The Clergy and Laity

OF HIS DIOCESE



SAINT JOHN, N.B.

The Saint John Diocese, New Brunswick

1973



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By the Grace of God  
The Aposto

Bishop of Sa

To the Clergy, Religious  
of the Diocese:

Health and Benediction

DEAR BRETHREN:

Raised by Almighty God to the  
episcopate through no merits of our  
we shall one day have to give an account  
to our keeping, we deem it a duty to  
of spiritual advice at the commencement  
It is related of St. John the Apostle  
in years and not able to deliver at  
meetings of the faithful, he contented  
each occasion: "Little children, love  
some of his followers, weary of his  
asked him why he always spoke thus  
"Because it is a commandment of the Lord  
this, it is sufficient." And so, dear brethren,  
the words of Christ's Apostle; that  
his message in the latter days of his  
the burden of ours in the very beginning  
and we say to you: "Love one another  
of a bishop's heart is to see his flock  
bonds of a common faith, but in the beginning  
since this is the characteristic mark of

Edward,

of God and Favour of  
Apostolic See,

of Saint John,

Religious Orders and Laity

Benediction in the Lord.

God to the exalted dignity of the  
acts of our own, and mindful that  
we are an account of the souls entrusted  
to us, it is our duty to address you a few words  
at the commencement of the Lenten season.  
The Apostle that, when far advanced  
in life, delivered a lengthy discourse at the  
Council of Jerusalem, contented himself with saying on  
the subject, "Brethren, love one another." When  
every one of hearing the same words,  
spoke thus, the Apostle replied:  
"The will of the Lord and if you fulfil  
it, dear brethren, we borrow to-day  
nothing; that which was the burden of  
the days of his Apostolic life, we make  
the very beginning of our episcopate  
to be, 'Love one another.'" The dearest wish  
of his flock united, not only in the  
present but in the bonds of fraternal charity,  
is the mark of all true followers of the

Divine Master. "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."—*John XIII.*, 35.

What a pleasing sight it must have been in the early ages of the Church to behold the harmony and good will that reigned among the faithful. "The multitude of the believers," says the Sacred Writer, "had but one heart and one soul."—*Acts IV.*, 32. As there was but one interest, there was but one mind among them. This spirit of brotherly love was a source of wonder to the very heathens of those days. "See," they said, "how these Christians love one another." Edifying, indeed, it must have been to see such unity among people who, for the most part, had not the slightest acquaintance with each other, and who were natives of different countries, spoke different languages, and who had different national customs. This mutual charity, the result of divine grace, subsisted so long that even in the age in which St. Ambrose lived — the fifth century — it was still the subject of universal admiration.

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Fraternal charity, dear brethren, is part of the very foundation and essence of Christianity. It may be defined to be a supernatural virtue infused into the soul, inclining it to wish well to every human creature for God's sake, and to be prepared to render to our fellow men, when occasion requires, those kindly offices we would wish them to render to us under similar circumstances. It is not a mere evangelical counsel which we are at liberty to adopt or reject, but it is a duty binding our very consciences. When our Lord said: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," He imposed upon us a strict obligation which forbids us to exclude a single member of the human race from the sanctuary of our affections. He wished us to understand that the love of our neighbor should be similar to that which we entertain for ourselves, having for its motive, the love of God, and, for its rule, our neighbor's welfare. We are all children of the same God, having but one and the same origin, redeemed by the blood of Christ and destined for everlasting happiness. Wherefore, our Blessed Saviour, inculcating a lesson unknown before He came on earth, has stamped it with the impress of His own power and made the precept of



loving mankind, universal. He has even gone so far, out of the depths of His desire to fix in our minds a profound conviction of the necessity of this virtue to refer to it as His own especial commandment: "This is my commandment that you love one another, as I have loved you."— *John XV., 12.*

The Catholic therefore, who forms his conduct on the lines of the Gospel, will never do anything that can tend to injure his neighbor in any respect in body, in reputation, in property, or in peace of mind; he will wish well to him, and always assist him as far as he can in his spiritual and corporal necessities. "True charity," remarks Cardinal Wiseman, "endeavors to see only the good side of our neighbor's conduct, and to throw a veil over his faults where duty does not oblige us to notice them. It teaches us to make every allowance for his circumstances and temptations. It brings before our eyes our own weakness, greater, perhaps by far, than that which our keen observation detected in him, and bids us extend towards him that pity and indulgence which we should wish should be shown to us by others, who are, doubtless, trying no less to discover flaws in our own character."

It is true, not much difficulty will be found in observing the precept of brotherly charity as long as it regards only those with whom we are on friendly terms, but when it comes to love those who hate us or do us harm, who are still doing all in their power to injure us — this is, indeed, a galling obligation to flesh and blood, a humiliation against which our pride protests and stubbornly rebels. And yet, dear brethren, for the very reason that it is repugnant to our nature, and because we cannot practise it without the special assistance of divine grace, it is the most shining and god-like part of the love of our neighbor, and, of all other virtues, the most profitable and meritorious to those who practise it.

The precept of loving our enemies is one which Christianity had the honor of introducing into the world. It belongs essentially and exclusively to the Christian religion. To the old pagan philosophers, it was utterly unknown. They understood well enough what *charity* meant, and they thought a man

could do no more beautiful act than forgive an injury, but their philosophy went no further. Even the Old Law, which God Himself dictated and delivered to the Hebrew people, did not go far beyond this. It forbade hatred and the desire of revenge; it even commanded the Jews to render kindly offices to an enemy, but did not go the length of commanding them to love him. That great precept, which is one of the glories of our religion, remained hidden in the mind of God until His Son, our Lord, brought it with Him from heaven and promulgated it to the world. When He came, He found an old maxim current among the Jews that had been transmitted from their fathers through many generations. It was clearly against the law of Moses, yet, it was deeply rooted in the minds and habits of the people, and this maxim, this immemorial custom, while it recommended them to love their friends, authorized them to hate their enemies. Now, this was in direct contradiction to the spirit of the Gospel, to the fundamental principle of the religion our Lord came to establish, and He opposed it with all the weight of His sovereign authority. "You have heard," said He to them, "that it hath been said: Thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thy enemy. But I say to you, love your enemies; do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you."—*Matt. V.*, 43. To which is added in St. Luke: "And bless them that curse you."—*St. Luke VI.*, 28. Here, you will observe, our Lord makes no mention of the precept already laid down in the Old Law. He does not bring forward the celebrated examples of Joseph or Moses or David who forgave freely the most atrocious wrongs and treated kindly those who tried to injure them. He does not even stop to show the justice and necessity of His commandment and the advantages accruing from it to society. He does not condescend to expose the sophistry, to tear in shreds the futile pretexts with which men seek to justify their hatred of their neighbor, but He simply lays down His law as a Divine Teacher and Legislator: I, who am your God, your Redeemer, your Master, I say to you: Love your enemies. Here is a command, positive and absolute, from which no exception is made either on account of the great-

ness of the injury or of the baseness of the offender. As if to enforce the perfect observance of it, He proposes His own example: "This is my commandment that you love one another, as I have loved you."—*John XV.*, 2. And the high perfection of His love for us consisted in this that, while we were sinners, His declared enemies, He loved us to the extent of dying for us.—*Rom. V.*, 8. "In this is charity," says St. John, "not as though we had loved God, but because He first loved us and sent His Son to be a propitiation for our sins. My dearest, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another."—1 *John IV.*, 10.

Dear brethren, all things are possible with God's assisting grace. Pray, therefore, that He may bestow upon you the spirit of humility and charity, and often meditate on the motives that urge you to the fulfilment of His law, motives most forcible to convince the understanding and to touch the heart. "All things whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do you also to them."—*Matt. VII.*, 12. Charity is the queen of all the virtues, and without it, vain will be every other. You might be attentive at your prayers, you might be assiduous at all your duties, you might even distribute all your goods to feed the poor and deliver your body to be burned, but, if you do not love your neighbor and succeed in conquering your aversion to those whom you dislike, your virtues are only on the surface, you practise them merely because they are pleasing to you. "Put ye on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, the bowels of mercy, benignity, humility, modesty, patience."—*Col. III.*, 12. "Bear ye one another's burdens."—*Gal. VI.*, 12. Be on good terms with every man. "If thou offerest thy gift at the altar, and there shalt remember that thy brother hath anything against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and first go and be reconciled to thy brother; and then come and offer thy gift."—*Matt. XXIII.*, 24. Do this that you may inherit a blessing.

We cannot close this pastoral letter without admonishing all those under our charge to enter most earnestly into the spirit of the sacred season of Lent, a season set apart

by the Church to prepare our souls by fervent prayer and by works of penance to commemorate the mysteries of the Passion and Death of our Divine Lord. We sincerely hope that this holy time may witness a revival of Catholic spirit, illustrated in attendance at daily Mass, at evening devotions, in frequent communion, in works of charity to the poor and in the avoidance of profane amusements. We also exhort you, dear brethren, with all the energy in our power, for the glory of God, the honor of religion and for the salvation of your souls, so dear to our episcopal heart, to abstain from all intoxicating liquor.

Among devotional exercises we recommend the Via Crucis, or Stations of the Cross, and the Rosary of the Mother of God as best suited to the spirit of this penitential season. Let a spirit of prayer and piety also reign in your homes. In but too few families is found the beautiful practise of saying the daily prayers in common, and yet, "the Christian home, in which family prayer is practised, becomes a sacred oratory, a holy shrine which Christ honors and blesses by His presence." "Where two or three are gathered in My name, there I am in the midst of them."—*Matt. XVIII.*, 19. You will not forget that there is a grave obligation on every child of the Church to comply with the Paschal precept.

The Regulations for Lent will be the same as those of last year.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all, brethren.

The Reverend Clergy will read this letter to their congregations on the first Sunday after its reception.

Given from our residence in St. John on the Feast of the Commemoration of the Passion of Christ, January 28, 1913.

† E. A. LEBLANC,  
*Bishop of St. John.*

A. W. MEAHAN,  
*Pro. Secretary.*

